





"I tell people all the time:  
Don't just talk about  
taking care of Soldiers.  
Take care of them."

— SMA Jack Tilley

**I**T WOULD be very easy for SMA Jack Tilley to boast about his accomplishments during the past three and a half years. He could talk about the 650,000 miles he's traveled or the nearly \$2 billion in pay raises he's fought for. He could take hours talking about the thousands of Soldiers he's greeted in every corner of the world. But the 12th sergeant major of the Army would rather spend the day talking about all the ways he will spoil his two granddaughters when he retires to Tampa, Fla., in January.

This has not been a typical tour of duty for Tilley. He's seen the fielding of the black beret and the Stryker Brigade. He spent weeks visiting injured Soldiers and heartbroken family members following the attacks on the Pentagon. He sponsored a USO trip to Afghanistan in 2002 that produced Darryl Worley's song "Have You Forgotten," which would later become a No. 1 hit on the country-music charts.

When he returns from the Middle East on Christmas Eve from his second USO tour, it will mark his third trip to Iraq and sixth visit to Afghanistan in two years.

He's enjoyed bringing celebrities to entertain the troops, but prefers a trash-talking game of spades at an air-defense artillery site in Kuwait over the glitz and glamour of a stage. That has been his trademark — an ear-to-ear smile followed by a good-natured ribbing during a pool game or a one-armed pushup challenge. If "hooah" was a person it would look an awful lot like Tilley.

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MSG Richard Puckett is public affairs adviser to the sergeant major of the Army.

MSG Dave Schad

*...and best  
wishes*

# Farewell,



# SMA Tilley

Story and Photos by  
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Despite the miles and endless trips, Tilley continues to be amazed by all the familiar faces he sees. Although he's spent more than 35 years on active duty, having Soldiers recognize him is still a thrill. He often jokes about the "5 million or so pictures of him" that account for familiarity. But the real reason he is so recognized is because of his approachable presence and genuine love for people.

"Jack has not changed a bit," said retired CSM John Stephens, who supervised Tilley nearly 20 years ago at Fort Knox, Ky. "He has always been his own person. He impressed me back then with his ability to make things happen and he is still doing that today."

One of those things is refocusing the NCO corps on training Soldiers on basic skills. Tilley continually stressed safety, "train as you fight" — and

counseling. Taking a few extra moments to reassure a Soldier or family member is vital during this ongoing war, Tilley said.

"The most valuable thing you can give someone is your time," he said. "Taking care of people means a lot of things. It can mean listening, advising or making a correction when someone is making a mistake."

Life on the road has not been easy, but Tilley swears that every trip rejuvenated him and reminded him of why he loves the Army. The one-on-one encounters with Soldiers in places like a remote Afghan mountain



outpost or stateside dining facility kept him in touch with Soldiers and their issues.

Those conversations fueled his annual appearances before Congress and his office calls with Army Chief of Staff GEN Eric Shinseki, his boss for three years. They also kept Tilley focused on what he views as a





Throughout his tenure as sergeant major of the Army, Tilley made a point of meeting with Soldiers wherever and whenever he could — whether in Iraq, Afghanistan, Korea or at installations throughout the United States. He was also a tireless advocate for Soldiers and the Army as a whole, both on Capitol Hill and in one-to-one meetings with political leaders and community representatives.

noncommissioned officer's most sacred responsibility — taking care of Soldiers.

"What's funny is that I have worked on issues that bothered me when I was a private," Tilley said. "I tell people all the time: Don't just talk about taking care of Soldiers. Take care of them."

The biggest challenge was dealing with the time that it took for many projects to work through to completion. Modernizing the NCO education system or implementing programs like the first ever Department of the Army level NCO and Soldier of the Year competition didn't happen overnight.

"I'm not sure I'll really know what I accomplished for some time," he

said. "I think the true test will be in watching things unfold over the next few years. You really want to build on what those who came before you worked on. I carried the ball a few yards further and I'm sure the next sergeant major of the Army will do the same."

He still feels energetic enough to challenge any Soldier to an infamous "one-armed pushup" competition. Soon, however, he will hand out his last commemorative coin and pass the mantle to the 13th sergeant major of the Army. For the Army's most visible senior enlisted leader, saying goodbye will not be easy.

"There's no question that I've enjoyed my time," Tilley said. "It's

been such an honor to represent Soldiers and fight for their issues. I'm not saying goodbye, though, because I will always support Soldiers and do all I can to keep serving."

He plans on doing that in Tampa, where he, his wife Gloria and son Brian will spend all their free time spoiling 7-year-old Destiny and 4-year-old Jordan, the daughters of son Kevin and daughter-in-law Tonja.

"I missed out on a lot of my children's experiences over 35 years," Tilley said. "I'll be doing all I can to make up for that over the next 35. Those little girls represent all that we are fighting to protect. I will sleep well at night knowing that the Soldiers I leave behind will keep them safe." 